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INDIAN PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.

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THE AUTHOR DISCUSSES THE EFFECT THAT DIFFERING CULTURES AND BEHAVIOR PATTERNS WITHIN A COMMUNITY HAVE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. HE STATES THAT COMMUNITY LEADERS MUST UNDERSTAND THESE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN ORDER TO ELICIT PARTICIPATION AND COOPERATION FROM BOTH INDIAN AND NONINDIAN RESIDENTS. THE AUTHOR ILLUSTRATES THE POINTS HE MAKES BY ACTUAL EXAMPLES FROM THE PHOENIX AREA PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE. (CL)

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By Edward C. Hinckley

The author's particular educational background has been in the fields of cultural anthropology and elementary education. Activities among American Indian groups have indicated that principles borrowed from these fields can be very useful in community development programs. From anthropology, for example, one can learn of the importance of understanding the cultural characteristics of the people with whom one is working, without attempting to judge the intrinsic values of these characteristics. From education, on the other hand, the concept of "beginning where the students are" can be of prime importance.

By the same token, there are principles of anthropology and education, fallacious in their own fields, that are equally fallacious in community development. The feeling, sometimes encountered among anthropologists, that it is "wrong" to change an existing culture has no place in community development, as there can be no development without some degree of change. (It is to be hoped, however, that the community worker will act as a catalyst to the change, rather than as a direct "change-agent.")

A danger to be avoided by one who has had experience in the field of education is that of thinking of the Indian people as children. Though they may appear to be unsophisticated children when measured by standards of the surrounding non-Indian majority culture, so do we appear to them when measured by their own cultural standards. It seems most advisable to think of them as "people," with no effort made to compare them, quantitatively or qualitatively, to other racial or cultural groups. If this is done, it is believed that some of the principles of community development which will be touched upon in this paper can be applied with equal effectiveness to programs involving any under-developed community, whether racially, culturally or economically under-developed.

It is the author's firm belief that the effectiveness of any community development program will vary directly with the amount of participation in the program by members of the community. Other factors, such as the program's applicability to the needs of the community, effectiveness of presentation, appropriateness of materials, etc. will also affect the success or failure of the program, but degree of participation often seems to be a primary factor. If this is so, then it is important for the community worker to be able to recognize participation when it occurs. In addition to the more familiar types of active and passive participation, generally conducted on a vocal level by members of non-Indian communities, it should be remembered that the old Indian man, who speaks and understands no English, and who sits in the back row at all community meetings, may well be indicating by his very presence that he tentatively approves of the program the community worker is describing.

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This can be very important when it is realized that he may be the authority figure of that particular community. In other cases, his silence may be a way of indicating disapproval. For reasons such as these, it is obviously desirable to have as complete an understanding as possible of the cultural background of the community in question. It is important to be able to measure participation, and hence progress, in extremely small increments; increments so small that they might well escape notice unless the community worker is especially prepared to recognize them.

An understanding of the composition of the community is just as important as an ability to recognize participation. The community worker should have an understanding of the social structure and formation of the community, as well as some knowledge of lines of authority within the community. This understanding of the community's composition should be in both traditional Indian terms, and as it has been amended by contact with non-Indian culture. In non-Indian society, for example, men are generally expected to assume primary leadership roles in a majority of instances. In a traditionally matrilineal Indian society, such an expectation on the part of the community worker would obviously upset, if not destroy, a community development program.

Another problem encountered in Indian community development is the difference between actual and assumed patterns of leadership and habits of decision-making. Traditional Indian society generally had provision for a number of different leaders, for different occasions, such as waging war, conducting meetings with other tribes and with non-Indians, providing spiritual leadership, etc. These leaders more or less arose as particular occasions demanded. Decision-making within the traditional Indian community generally involved total-group discussion until some type of unanimous consent was reached. Both of these traditional characteristics are in sharp contrast to the now-common pattern of Tribal Chairmen, Tribal Councils, majority rules, democratic procedures, and the like, found among practically all Indian groups today. The conflict arises when the community worker discovers that the assumed patterns, with which he is very familiar from his own cultural context, often do not represent what is still uppermost in the minds of the community members--namely, the actual, traditional patterns of multiple leadership and unanimous consent in reaching decisions.

A brief description of present Papago Indian tribal organization might serve to illustrate this point. Under the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act, the Papago Tribal Council is composed of twenty-two elected Tribal Councilmen; two from each of eleven Districts. These men elect a Tribal Chairman and a Tribal Vice-Chairman annually, either from within their own body or from without. In addition, each District has a District Council with elected officers; the Tribal representatives from a particular District may or may not hold office on the District Council as well. Within each District, there are sometimes found informally-organized village councils, often a carry-over from

the days before non-Indian arrivals in the area. The actual leader in a particular village or District may or may not be one of the elected (assumed) leaders, but is often the old, non-English-speaking gentleman in the back row, referred to earlier.

In a situation such as this, it is necessary to "work at both ends." It is important to involve the participation of the elected leaders, while at the same time devoting a great deal of attention towards the participation of the "man on the street" who may represent the real leadership of the community. By checking the reactions of one against those of the other, it is possible, to some degree, to check the effectiveness of the development program as a whole.

Assuming that the community worker is skilled in recognizing participation in all of its variations, and is willing to measure progress in small increments, and assuming that he has some understanding of the structure of the community, let us briefly examine a community program conducted on the Papago Indian Reservation and see how these factors contributed to the program.

Technically, this was a Nutrition Education Project. It was commenced because of a desire on the part of the Phoenix Area Public Health Service staff to increase the intake of Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and calcium among the Papagos, through increased consumption of various fruits and of milk. The community in question (actually three neighboring Papago villages) had recently begun receiving dried milk through the Department of Agriculture's Donated Commodity Program, so an educational program involving uses of dried milk was also timely in this way. In addition to increasing the consumption of Vitamins A and C, as well as calcium, it was hoped that this activity would serve as a pilot-project for others, which could be repeated in other villages on the Papago Reservation, as well as on other reservations within the Phoenix Area.

The first actual event was a meeting, held in the community in question. The local Bureau of Indian Affairs day school served as a focal point for the three villages, as well as a convenient place for meetings. Involved in this meeting were representatives of all the interested agencies and the Papago community. These included Public Health Service staff, both local and from the Phoenix Area Office; local Bureau of Indian Affairs staff; the county home agent; the state nutritionist; the local Franciscan priest; and the Donated Commodities Distribution Director for the state. Papago representatives included the two tribal councilmen from that district (one of whom was chairman of the district council), the school cook (a local Papago woman), the Papago wife of the local Bureau of Indian Affairs range aid, two local Papago women who had indicated an interest during preliminary field work, and two Papago Interpreters. In this way, both elected leaders and the "man on the street" were represented.

Although participation at this time, by all concerned, was on a formal structured basis, that of the Papagos present was sufficient to

indicate a much stronger interest in possible uses of dried milk than in the benefits of drinking more fruit juice. Accordingly, based on these expressions form the members of the community, Publis Health Service interest in Vitamins A and C was tabled, and planning efforts were concentrated on an educational program involving dried milk. In other words, the program was started where the students were!

Following this meeting, a smaller representative group was formed to make definite plans. The number of non-Indians was reduced to the local school principal, the local Public Health community worker, and the Franciscan priest. All of the Papagos present at the first meeting were invited to the smaller group meetings, however. As a result of several small-group meetings, it was decided to avoid the use of visual materials, even though some were available which had been especially designed for use with non-Anglo communities. (Needless to say, materials prepared for use with middle-class, English-speaking populations are worse than useless in programs involving non-middle-class, non-English-speaking communities.) It was felt by the Papago participants that an actual demonstration would be the most effective way possible of presenting material relating to the many possible uses of dried milk in Papago dietary patterns.

In discussing the plans for the demonstration, the school kitchen or the home of one of the local Papagos were suggested as places suitable for such an activity. However, the Papago representatives (who became more and more communicative as they participated in more and more small-group meetings) felt that the demonstration should be held at the community's feast house, adjoining the local Catholic church. Feast houses--adobe structures consisting of a covered shed with tables, and an open-air ramada, complete with several adobe fireplaces for cooking--may be found in practically every Papago village, and their use antedates non-Indian contact, though now they are generally used on various Catholic feast days.

The demonstration was held--a dozen or more "cooks" each prepared a dish or a drink involving dried milk, and everyone present was given a sample of each dish or beverage. More than forty Papagos from the three villages attended the demonstration. The "cooks" included not only several of the agency representatives involved in the initial meeting, but also three of the local Papago women. By virtue of using the outdoor fireplaces for cooking, conditions similar to those found in a majority of Papago homes were duplicated, and much amusement was engendered by the difficulty a majority of the non-Indians experienced in cooking under these conditions! Indian participation at the demonstration can be divided into four categories. Physical participation involved the three Papago "cooks." Audience participation involved everyone getting a sample of the cooked products. Formal participation occurred when the Papago Tribal Chairman delivered an address on the beneficial results of milk consumption. He had been kept informed of the progress of the entire project, and was pleased to attend the demonstration. Informal participation on the part of everyone involved the aforementioned amusement!

This marked the end of the Nutrition Education Project. As mentioned earlier, success or failure of community development projects is often difficult to measure. However, in subsequent months, requests for similar demonstrations were received from half-a-dozen other Papago villages, scattered over the three million acre reservation. Even more significant, was an observable change in the attitude of members of the community towards the government's interest in the consumption of dried milk. During preliminary field work related to the program, an effort was made to collect information concerning the normal use of dried milk by community members. Even though the questions were asked by a Public Health Nurse who had worked in that particular area for eight years, and who was well-accepted by the community, it was found that the basic reaction to the questions was one of hesitation, coupled with the fear that the interest in dried milk presaged a loss of its availability. Accordingly, this particular line of research was immediately stopped. In contrast, questions pertaining to the use of dried milk asked after the demonstration were met openly and without hesitation or fear; the demonstration had convinced the Papago community members that the government's interest in the subject was a benign one. As a result of this attitude change, as well as of the invitations for other demonstrations, it was felt by all concerned that the program had been a successful one, regardless of whether actual consumption of dried milk increased or not.

Perhaps it will be felt that the activity described was not a "true" community development project. Many activities can serve to reduce the socio-cultural differences between an under-developed community and communities of the surrounding majority culture. If these differences are deleterious to the under-developed community, any activity conducted with meaningful participation by community members, which serves to counteract these differences, can be rightfully called "community developments."

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